Meantime Massena, having conducted the defense of Genoa with heroism and persistency until the last, had been forced to open negotiations for surrender. He was embittered, charging that he was both deserted and sacrificed: a glance at the map will show how utterly impossible it would have been for the French forces from the north to have crossed and recrossed the Apennines for his relief, and moreover the strategic moves, did not and could not foresee the ill-advised Austrian tenacity in the siege of Genoa, at a time when Melas's necessity required every man within reach to rally at Alessandria as swiftly as possible. Could the French general have held out for three days longer, Ott would have been compelled to raise the siege in order to release his own troops for the greater struggle soon to take place. As it was, the terms offered were the best possible, and on June fourth the French marched out with eight thousand men under no conditions, leaving the scene by water, however, instead of joining Suchet to strengthen the army at once: a move which Bonaparte savagely condemned in his latter days. On the sixth Ott left with his army for the Austrian rendezvous. Had he renounced the capture of Genoa, he might have joined the force of Melas with his army unharmed. The sequel showed that some one had made a serious mistake; and that some one was not the French commander-in-chief. Simultaneously Bonaparte was directing from Milan the slow passage of the great river at three points between Piacenza and Pavia, and bringing in from all around the scattered companies which had been clearing the country in various skirmishes. He left a fortified camp at Stra-della and five available bridges over the Po, in case he should be beaten and compelled to retreat. On the eighth one of Melas's couriers to Vienna was captured, and his despatches, which told of the disaster at Genoa,